

MYSTERY OF THE ANASAZI

A RAVAGED TALE BY ERIC AVEDISSIAN

Dr. Miles Macray gazed dreamily at the book on his desk and turned a page stiffly. Photographic reproductions of ancient petroglyphs, captured almost half a century before on the living rock walls of some godforsaken mesa in the southwest all appeared the same. Macray knew all about the ancestors of the southwestern tribes from his youth spent exploring the cliff dwellings in New Mexico and Arizona. He thought the native inhabitants deserved what they received from the white settlers – lifelong confinement in reservations. Made them easier to study, he reckoned.

As he sat lost in his memories from a past excursion, the door to his office opened. Macray looked up from his book and saw two muscular men standing before him. The men had dark skin, straight shoulder-length hair and wore gold jewelry of an almost primitive design. Their flat noses and pierced ears led him to conclude they weren't from the university's alumni committee.

"Dr. Macray?" asked the man on the left in thickly accented English.

"Yes," Macray replied. "How can I help you?"

The pair walked to Macray's desk. The archeologist could see both men wore the same style of white suit.

"We have come a long way to see you, Dr. Macray," said the man on the right.

"Have you?" Macray intoned.

"From Mexico," the other man said. "Just outside Mexico City."

Macray leaned back in his chair, saying "So, what business brings you to this country?"

"Our employer heard you were the foremost expert on ancient southwestern Indian cultures," the man on the right said. "Our employer wants to hire you for an expedition into New Mexico."

A smile creased Macray's lips. "Does he?"

"Yes." Apparently, it was the turn of the man on the left again. "He said you would be perfect for the job. He said you know all about the Anasazi."

"The Cliff Dwellers? Yes, I've been to their sites. I even have a few pottery shards if you'd care to see them..."

"We are not interested in broken pots, Dr. Macray," the man on the right snapped. "We're looking for the secret of Pueblo Bonito. Our employer wants to discover what happened to the Anasazi. He wants to know why they all mysteriously vanished 500 years ago. He has a theory."

"Does he?" Macray said, skeptically.

"It involves dark magic," the other man said, and produced a photograph from his breast pocket of an elderly Navajo. "This is a shaman who owns a relic from Pueblo Bonito."

"What sort of relic?" Macray asked.

"A prayer stick used in Anasazi rituals," said the man on the left. "We will help you get the relic. You must use it to help us get into the Great Kiva under Pueblo Bonito. That's our destination. We will pay you five thousand dollars if you can do it."

"What about the old man?" Macray asked. "How will you get him to part with his precious relic?"

"He is old; things can happen to old people, and then they are no longer an issue," the other man said with a slight smile. "Do you have a problem with this?"

"No," drawled Macray. "No, I don't have a problem with that at all."





BACKGROUND

The Anasazi were a Native American people whose civilization thrived from 850 A.D. to 1250 in the southern Colorado Plateau, northeastern Arizona, southeastern Utah and northwestern New Mexico.

Anasazi is a Navajo word for “ancient enemies,” and this has caused consternation with the neighboring Puebloan tribes who are their descendants. The term “Ancient Ones” or “Old Ones” is less offensive and is acceptable to use.

The Anasazi constructed mud brick houses, lodges and kivas, or sacred underground rooms, sometimes under overhanging cliffs. Not all Anasazi settlements were built in these inaccessible cliff faces; the largest villages were in Chaco Canyon in northern New Mexico.

Excavations of Anasazi ruins began in the 1880s when rancher Richard Wetherill learned from a Ute chief of the existence of sacred Indian dwellings up in the cliffs. Wetherill, intrigued with tales of the “Old Ones,” persuaded the chief to show him these big houses.

Wetherill and his brothers explored the ruins over the next few years, uncovering pottery and baskets and other artifacts. Wetherill called these ancient peoples the “Cliff Dwellers” and gained notoriety for his exploration of the sites.

In 1893, as Wetherill excavated a deep pit, he discovered skeletons among the pottery and artifacts. Several of the skeletons had cracked skulls and flint arrows in their backbones, leading the rancher to surmise a possible execution or sacrifice.

He also noted strange pictographs on the walls depicting a grisly battle scene. Wetherill recorded his observations in his journal, including interviews he conducted with local tribes about these so-called “Cliff Dwellers.”

In time, Wetherill became a minor celebrity and donated many of his finds to Eastern universities. But a mishandling of the artifacts by university and accusations Wetherill was merely a pothunter dimmed his reputation, until he discovered mummified remains in a few ruins. He spoke Navajo and Ute and traded with these tribes during expeditions.

While exploring Chaco Canyon in 1910, Wetherill and his assistant were ambushed and Wetherill was shot to death. Accounts claim a Navajo whose horse was stolen shot Wetherill; other stories point to Wetherill’s own assistant who was moved by tales of an Anasazi treasure and wanted his boss out of the picture.

According to these legends, the Anasazi stashed away a fortune in gold, turquoise-encrusted masks and exquisite pottery and weaponry at Pueblo Bonito.

Archeologists believe the Anasazi simply left their settlements and either became or joined other tribes, such as the Zuni, Hopi and Pueblo.

But some unsavory rumors persist claiming the Anasazi were attacked by another tribe and either starved to death or were all killed. Some legends say the Aztecs traveled to the region and swayed the Anasazi holy men to practice the religion of the Aztecs. According to these tales, in time, the Anasazi grew corrupt and practiced cannibalism, black magic and unlocked a gateway to the spirit world.

In the world of the *Ravaged Earth Society*, the latter stories actually happened.

The Anasazi at Pueblo Bonito, led by a corrupt shaman named Dark Whisperer, practiced repugnant blood sacrifices and cannibalism. He believed the way to defeat the Aztec invaders was to use their own magic against them. Dark Whisperer forged three prayer sticks that he used in a grand kiva at Pueblo Bonito to open a portal to the spirit world. There he communicated with the dark spirits and grew more and more corrupt.

Instead of growing in strength, Dark Whisperer became insane with power. He forced his followers to eat their weaker kin, then made them practice self-mutilation to appease the dark spirits.

When the elders learned of these ghastly deeds, they sent warriors to kill Dark Whisperer. But the vile shaman sensed the plot against him and rather than his followers betraying him, he hypnotized them, opened the portal to the spirit world, and cracked the skulls of his followers. Their spirits flowed from their bodies and were sucked into the spirit world, never to be seen again.

When the warriors arrived in the kiva, they saw Dark Whisperer performing his unholy ritual. One

of the warriors snatched a prayer stick from the altar, closing the gateway to the spirit world, while another warriors struck Dark Whisperer. Anasazi holy men cursed Dark Whisperer and the village, which was abandoned by what few families remained. Dark Whisperer lay dying with the hundreds of followers he killed in the Great Kiva. With his last remaining breath, Dark Whisperer uttered a powerful incantation that transformed his body into that of an undead. His soul still retains some control of his desiccated body, and he awaits the day when some curious explorer finds the Great Kiva.

Dr. Miles Macray, an archeologist from a big Eastern university, wants to uncover why the Anasazi vanished. Macray also has ulterior motives for his expedition: he's being paid a great sum of money by Order of the Winged Serpent, an occult organization from Mexico led by Seven Jaguar, a mystic who wants to bring back the bloodthirsty Aztec religion! Seven Jaguar has a theory there were arcane methods involved and that the Anasazi used dark magic. He also believes the early Aztecs made contact with the Anasazi and left their influence on that culture.

Local tribes dispute this claim, except one man, a Navajo shaman named Talks to the Gods.

Macray knows from an interview Talks to the Gods gave with a tabloid that the shaman possesses a rare arcane item, a prayer stick used by Dark Whisperer. The insidious archaeologist anonymously threatened the shaman, telling him that he doesn't part with the artifact, terrible things will befall him and his family.

Talks With The Gods is too proud to part with the prayer stick, which his grandfather found at Pueblo Bonito. Currently, Talks With The Gods is employed by a variety show playing in Las Vegas, where he displays authentic Native American shamanistic rituals. He's trained his body to walk on hot coals, handle venomous snakes and other fantastic feats.

Macray, feeling pressure from the Order of the Winged Serpent, has decided to travel to Las Vegas with a few Aztec cultists and make the Navajo shaman see reason. He plans on killing Talks With The Gods and stealing the prayer stick, which he'll use to unlock the secrets of Pueblo Bonito.

Using This Adventure

Mystery of the Anasazi is a good introductory adventure for Novice characters. It introduces characters to the game world and can be played in a single evening. The heroes will get a chance to travel to the American Southwest and discover what happened to the ancient Anasazi while preventing a corrupt archeologist from securing a powerful relic and treasure.



New Hindrances & Edges

Some characters in this adventure have a setting specific Hindrance or Edge and these are detailed below.

GESTURES & INCANTATIONS (MINOR OR MAJOR HINDRANCE)

Your hero is required to perform intricate gestures and vocalize complex incantations to activate his powers. Being unable to perform either of these tasks will prevent him from using his powers. The minor version of this Hindrance affects a single power (player's choice), while the major version affects all powers.

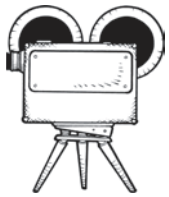
RITUALS (MAJOR HINDRANCE)

Heroes with this Hindrance are required to perform elaborate rituals (such as burning incense or scribing magical circles on the floor) in order to activate their powers. All of their powers are affected by this Hindrance. If prevented from speaking or moving freely, your hero is unable to enact his ritual and therefore cannot use any of his powers. Furthermore, during a round in which your hero activates a power, he may perform no other actions (including movement)!

FOCUSED MIND (POWER EDGE)

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background, Smarts d8+, Spirit d8+

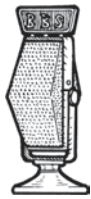
Your hero is able to stay focused and alert even under the most stressful of situations. Whenever he makes an Arcane Skill or Smarts roll to avoid having his powers disrupted, he may apply a +2 bonus.



SCENE 1

The Night the Lights Went Out in Vegas

The adventure begins in January 1936 in New York City. John Yazzie, a 21-year old Navajo from Arizona who is attending college in New York City, contacts the heroes. The characters meet with Yazzie in Manhattan at a nice restaurant or club.



THE NARRATOR SPEAKS

The year is 1936, but this world is different from our own. Strange, dark forces manifest across the globe, darkening the hearts of some men and spawning vile creatures and corrupt magic. It is a time for heroes: bold adventurers, stalwart magicians, super humans and daring explorers. From the solitude of their New York City headquarters, the adventurers plan their strategy against a world of villains. Suddenly, the phone rings. On the other end of the line is a scared young man asking for your help. You arrange a meeting and things are set into motion...

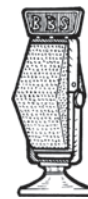
A Grandson's Plea

Yazzie, a clean-shaven man in a suit and tie, has a friendly and outgoing demeanor. He tells the heroes that he's concerned his grandfather, a Navajo shaman named Talks With The Gods, might be in mortal danger.

Yazzie said he received distressing phone calls from his grandfather. The old man claimed someone sent him threatening notes promising to kill him if he didn't part with a prayer stick, an ancient artifact that's been in the Yazzie family for generations. The Anasazi priests used the prayer stick in ceremonies over 800 years ago. Talks to the Gods acquired the prayer stick from his grandfather, who found it at Anasazi ruins in New Mexico. According to Yazzie, legend says the prayer stick has magical properties and can unlock the way into Pueblo Bonito, an ancient Anasazi ruin.

Yazzie said the man who threatened his grandfather promised he'd kill the old man to get the prayer stick. Talks With The Gods first started receiving the threatening letters shortly after he gave an interview to a local newspaper about shamanism and some of the ritualistic items he possessed, the prayer stick being among them.

Yazzie says his family isn't rich, but they can afford to pay a \$1,000 reward to any hero who exposes the identity of those who threatened his grandfather. When you're done explaining this to the heroes, Yazzie says the following:



"My grandfather is a very headstrong man. He is so proud of his people and of his ancestors. If the prayer stick were to fall into the wrong hands, who knows what magic it could unleash? Entrance into Pueblo Bonito isn't something to be taken lightly. It is said in old stories that there is a giant kiva or sacred chamber underground Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon, the center of the Anasazi civilization. Within that kiva lies the secret of what happened to the Anasazi. Many archeologists say the Anasazi simply moved away from their dwellings and joined other tribes due to a drought that wiped out their food supply. My grandfather thinks the Aztecs corrupted their society and dark magic degenerated the people. Legends of an evil shaman who practiced cannibalism among his people offend most Navajo, but my grandfather believed them."

Yazzie tells the heroes his grandfather performs traditional shamanism as part of a variety show in Las Vegas, showing tourists how the Native American shaman chanted, concocted herbal remedies and used a variety of ceremonial masks and dances.

The young Navajo tells the heroes his grandfather is performing at The Meadows Casino.

Sin City

How players arrive in Las Vegas is up to them. The city does have railroad and air service, though the train station and airstrips are small and not accustomed to handling a lot of passengers.

Those taking the train find the Union Pacific Station to be dismal, but train service from Denver is reliable.



LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Las Vegas is a hot and dry frontier town in the harsh southern Nevada desert. Ranchers and gamblers, prostitutes and mobsters and people looking to make a fast buck all flock to this lawless outpost. The recent infusion of mob money into civic life created many new structures, most of them hotels and casinos, but the mob, realizing it had better play the benevolent benefactors, also constructed schools and a hospital.

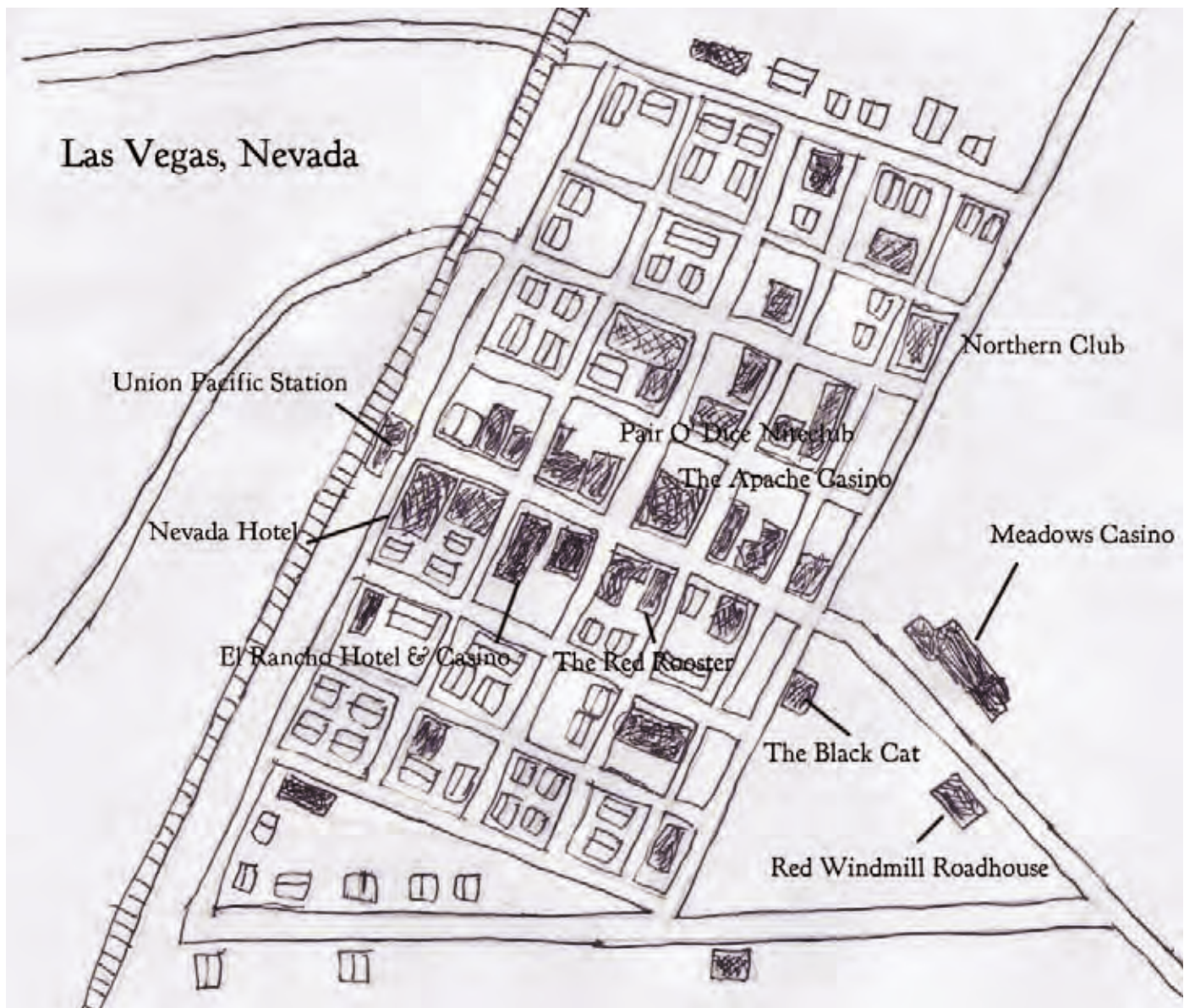
Many of the tourists in Las Vegas are there to see the construction of Boulder Dam or awaiting a quickie divorce after only living in Nevada for six weeks.

Fremont Street offers gambling dens, hotels and casinos, most of them run by the Chicago mob. The

primary casinos in Las Vegas are The Apache Casino, The Meadows Casino, Nevada Hotel, The Red Rooster, El Rancho Hotel and Casino, and the Pair O'Dice Nite Club. Lesser gambling parlors include The Black Cat, the Northern Club and the Red Windmill Roadhouse.

Al Capone's mob money is pumped into the town, and the Chicago criminal boss owns half the town council, police force and city judges. Capone's goons are holed up at a few of the casinos "minding the store."

If the heroes want to gamble while they're in town, remember all Gambling rolls here are made at a -2, thanks to a little help from Capone's boys rig-





ging roulette wheels, craps rolls and slot machines. Those trying their luck at cards won't fare any better.

A notorious red light district fronts North Street, with cathouses numbering in the dozens. Saloons, bars and pawnshops round out the places where tourists spend their last few dollars. The Pioneer Loan Shop is the best pawnshop in town; they trade anything for anything.

Those who feel cheated can always find a square meal at the Green Shack Restaurant, one of the few businesses in town not touched by Capone.

The Las Vegas Airstrip is located outside of town to the south. It mainly handles small aircraft but doesn't have any facilities for airships.

DR. MILES MACRAY

Dr. Miles Macray checks into The Meadows Casino on Boulder Highway with two bodyguards. The bodyguards are cult members from the Order of the Winged Serpent and wear suits and jewelry inspired by Aztec designs. Macray is a lanky man with a mustache and glasses. He is always jotting things down in his notebooks but isn't a total bookworm: he hides a revolver in a sling under his jacket in case trouble breaks out.

Macray is interested in attending the variety show in the casino's theater. Macray doesn't care about the singers, dancers or comedians. He wants to see the Navajo shaman Talks With The Gods and his sacred artifacts, particularly the Anasazi prayer stick.

Macray will do anything to get that prayer stick and uncover the secret of the Anasazi's treasure and disappearance.

The Show Must Go On!

The variety show is held at The Meadows Casino, which features comfortable rooms, a restaurant, casino and theater. The stage manager, Stan Benson, is aware of the threats Talks With The Gods received from his anonymous tormentor, but the shaman refused to leave the show. Benson is stuck: he doesn't want anyone harming the old man or anyone else in his company, but he also doesn't want to lose his star act. Benson isn't taking any chances: he's sequestered his performers in their dressing rooms under heavy guard. Nobody is to come backstage until the performance is concluded.

If the heroes try to Persuade their way back, all rolls suffer a -4. Benson is very stubborn and won't grant access to his performers for safety reasons.

The entertainers will only be available after the show. If the heroes wish to buy tickets, they cost \$1. They can sit through the whole show if they like. The acts include (in their order of appearance):

DR. MILES MACRAY (WILD CARD)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Gambling d6, Guts d6, Healing d8, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Archeology) d10, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d8, Streetwise d6, Tracking d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Overconfident, Greedy, Xenophobic

Edges: Dodge

Gear: revolver, backpack, compass, spectacles, archeology tools, survival knife (STR+1), Atlas of America, \$1,500.

AZTEC HENCHMAN

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d6, Shooting d6, Notice d6, Knowledge (occult) d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Loyal (to the Order of the Winged Serpent), Gestures & Incantations (Major)

Edges: Wizard, Arcane Background: Magic, Dodge

Powers: blast, bolt, stun

Gear: Traditional Aztec warrior's headdress, white suit, automatic pistol, throwing knife

- **Burke & Rigby:** Tommy Burke and Joey Rigby are standup comedians from Boston whose act include the famous comedy skit “Let’s Buy A Cow” and “Not In My Basement!” The two are responsible for the comedic catchphrase, “It’s like Miami all over again!” Their act is mostly corny, but that’s why they are the opener.
- **The Sizzling Sullivan Sisters:** Raven-haired Brooklyn beauties Karen and Lisa entertain with song and dance and can high-step better than any Parisian can-can girl!
- **Johnny Fortune:** A silken-voiced crooning sensation, Fortune sings ballads, love songs and tunes to fall in love by.
- **General Parker & His Orchestra:** “General” Nate Parker is one of the top African-American bandleaders in the western U.S., and his orchestra plays hot jazz numbers.
- **Sigmund & Ray:** Gunther Sigmund and Jimmy Ray are lion tamers from Germany and the U.S., respectively. They bring their act to the stage by training a lion to beg for a steak, jump through a hoop and play dead.
- **Talks With The Gods:** This Navajo shaman recreates authentic native rituals and demonstrates his tribal artifacts, the Anasazi prayer stick among them.



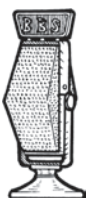
Each act performs for ten minutes. Whether the heroes want to sit through the whole show is up to them. Anyone making a Notice roll in the theater observes Macray seated in the audience, surrounded by his Aztec bodyguards.

If the heroes manage to finagle their way or sneak into Talks With The Gods’ dressing room and tell the shaman his life is in danger, the old Navajo appears grateful, then tenses up.

He tells the heroes he will not be intimidated by anyone, especially an archeologist looking for fame.

Talks With The Gods proposes the heroes help him get to Pueblo Bonito to find the Anasazi treasure before anyone else does. He even Persuades reluctant heroes if they’re doubtful.

If the heroes aren’t convinced, Talks With The Gods tells them:



“This prayer stick is enchanted. My grandfather found it while he was a young man exploring Chaco Canyon. He said the stick unlocks a great kiva underground, where great evil still lurks. He said one day, one of us must return and confront this evil and put an end to it. The Old Ones knew of this evil and tried to stop it, but only contained it. If someone wants to unleash it, that concerns me and my people. My grandson was wise to send you to me. Now I know we must travel to Chaco Canyon and into the heart of the Anasazi.”

TALKS WITH THE GODS (WILD CARD)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Healing d10, Knowledge (Shamanism) d10, Notice d6, Shooting d4, Tracking d8, Survival d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Cautious, Elderly, Outsider, Rituals

Edges: Arcane Background: Shaman, Focused Mind

Spells: dispel, healing, deflection, environmental protection

Gear: Knapsack, medicine pouches, traditional clothing, prayer stick



Stage Fright

Macray hired some mob goons to bribe the guards away from the dressing rooms. Macray gave the goons explicit instructions to break into the shaman's dressing room and take the prayer stick. If Talks With The Gods is in the dressing room, the goons are to subdue the old man and grab the relic.

The heroes can learn of this plot if they make a Notice roll to hear Macray whisper to the mob goons in the lobby before the show.

There are three mobsters, each armed with automatic pistols. They head backstage to bribe the guards before Sigmund & Ray take the stage. The heroes will have ten minutes to stop them before Talks With The Gods goes onstage.

Remember, any loud noises like gunfire will certainly attract unwanted attention!

If the heroes see Talks With The Gods before he's scheduled to perform, play out the encounter above, where he asks the heroes to accompany him to Chaco Canyon.

The House Wins!

Macray has another plan if his mob goons fail. He sends the Aztecs after the heroes. The cultists use their dark magic to paralyze the heroes so Macray can steal the prayer stick. Whatever happens, Macray must survive this encounter. He plays a role later in the adventure.

If the heroes engage in a skirmish with the Aztecs, backstage instantly becomes chaotic. Performers lock themselves in their dressing rooms, Sigmund & Ray's lion escapes, and Benson summons the casino manager and the police.

The combat lasts for seven rounds before the police arrive.

When the Dust Clears...

After the fight, Macray and his remaining henchmen escape. Talks With The Gods thanks the heroes and offers his automobile to them for the trip to Chaco Canyon. The elderly Navajo shaman insists they make the trip to the Anasazi's ancient city, Pueblo Bonito before Macray reaches it. The shaman reminds the heroes he won't be safe unless the prayer stick is returned to the sacred chamber in Pueblo Bonito. He chooses one trustworthy hero and gives them the prayer stick, telling them to guard the item.

Of course, Talks With The Gods intends to come along for the ride.

MOBSTER

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Shooting d8, Taunt d6.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Mean, Vengeful

Edges: Dodge

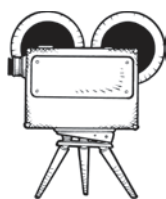
Gear: Beretta 1934, suits, \$150

Anasazi Prayer Stick

Location: American Southwest

History: The Anasazi used these sacred items to heal the sick and to curse their enemies. This particular prayer stick had a more sinister use. It was forged by a shaman called Dark Whisperer who used it, along with two similar prayer sticks, to open a portal to the spirit world. The artifact is a yard-long stick decorated with paint and feathers and beads and distinctive Anasazi pictographs. The prayer stick is over 500 years old but surprisingly well preserved.

Powers: The stick's magic is twofold: it grants the owner protection against the blast, bolt and burst spells and, when placed near two other prayer sticks and an Anasazi incantation chanted, will open a portal to the spirit world. Macray knows the ritual and needs the prayer stick to accomplish this.



SCENE 2

DAM TROUBLE

Talks With The Gods suggests the heroes leave Las Vegas and start on their trip to Chaco Canyon in New Mexico immediately. The first town the heroes can drive to is Boulder City, 34 miles southeast from Las Vegas, near the Boulder Dam.

A Clean Town

When the Bureau of Reclamation built Boulder Dam, the construction workers and supervisors needed a permanent place to live. The old tent encampments wouldn't suffice for the lengthy project, so the U.S. government and Six Companies, the contractor building the dam, planned and established Boulder City.

BOULDER CITY, NEVADA

Boulder City is a planned community of cottages, bunkhouses and businesses near Boulder Dam. During Boulder Dam's construction, from 1931 until 1935, it housed the workers and supervisors from Six Companies. Now that the dam is complete, some workers moved on, but a majority stayed in town.

The government appointed a wiry, no-nonsense man named Sims Ely as city manager. Ely runs Boulder City like a dictatorship; any transgressors are banished or imprisoned. Unlike the wild and lawless Las Vegas, Boulder City forbids alcohol, prostitution and gambling. Because of Ely's heavy-handed tactics, or the effectiveness of the U.S. Marshals who patrol the town, Boulder City has no crime.

Heroes find Boulder City a stark contrast to Las Vegas; it's quiet and peaceful and mostly populated by families. The business district has retail stores, a movie theater, a few churches and some U.S. government offices. Unlike the unlawful Las Vegas, which flaunts Prohibition by openly serving alcohol, Boulder City is a teetotaler's paradise. The local dance hall serves sarsaparilla and soda instead of alcohol, and playing cards, even a friendly game of bridge, is forbidden.

Bar Brawl

The town's dancehall, the Union Saloon, serves pretty good meals, and the heroes are recommended there if asked if there's anything exciting in town.

Talks With The Gods heads to the Union Saloon shortly after the heroes arrive to get food and sarsaparilla. The shaman gets a little more than he bargains for when a few burly men ambush him and start a fight.

If the heroes are present at the saloon, they notice a group of men approaching Talks With The Gods. A few coarse words are exchanged and fists start flying! There are six mooks who manhandle the shaman.

The fight lasts five rounds before the remaining men flee out the back door, Talks With The Gods in tow. Searching for the shaman is useless; it seems he vanished in thin air. After the heroes try making Streetsmarts, Search or Tracking rolls, have them receive this note at their hotel:

*To those interested in the welfare of the old man,
Your friend is safe with us for the moment. But he will not remain so, unless you cooperate. Bring the prayer stick to the Boulder Dam at noon tomorrow. Do not go to the police and no funny business or your Indian friend will meet with a most unfortunate accident.*

Macray

The U.S. Marshals show no interest in the note, if presented to them. They want peace in their town and will incarcerate anyone fighting, including the heroes.

Macray kidnapped Talks With The Gods and plans to use the shaman to get the prayer stick from the heroes. This dramatic conflict plays out on top of Boulder Dam noon the next day.

If the heroes want to head to the dam at night to ambush Macray, their efforts are useless. Security is tight at the dam after dark, and they'll have a tough time getting close enough to the dam due to patrolling U.S. Marshals.





Boulder Dam

Built 34 miles south of Las Vegas in Black Canyon on the Colorado River, Boulder Dam is the largest dam in the world. Construction started in 1931 and ended in 1935, creating jobs for thousands of workers who flocked to the area and now live in nearby Boulder City.

Towering at 726 feet tall and 1,244 feet wide at its highest point, Boulder Dam is an engineering marvel. The dam contains four intake towers that draw water into a power plant. The massive banks of General Electric generators are still being installed in early 1936. When completed, the generators will provide electricity to the southwest.

The dam straddles the river, linking Nevada and Arizona via a road built atop the dam.

Two 32-foot tall winged bronze statues dubbed “Winged Figures of the Republic” guard the dam’s elevator towers. A plaque lists the names of those who died during the dam’s construction and a monument features a celestial map depicting the constellations the exact day the dam was dedicated by President Garner in 1935.

When the heroes arrive, they find the normally bustling dam eerily quiet.

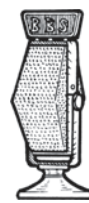
Hostage Standoff

Macray’s goons are holding Talks With The Gods at gunpoint at the top of Boulder Dam. The shaman’s wrists are bound to a cable slung across one of the concrete supports on the dam’s rim. Macray also positioned his mooks at various spots on the dam’s apex, armed with rifles. Macray warns the heroes if they try anything funny, his men will push Talks With The Gods over the edge of Boulder Dam!

There are six armed mooks positioned near the intake towers and on the dam’s rim. They train their rifles on the heroes and will act as one if Macray gives the signal.

Macray instructs one of the heroes to approach with the prayer stick. If the heroes refuse, Macray shouts an order and the mooks begin firing and Talks With The Gods is pushed over the southern face of the dam!

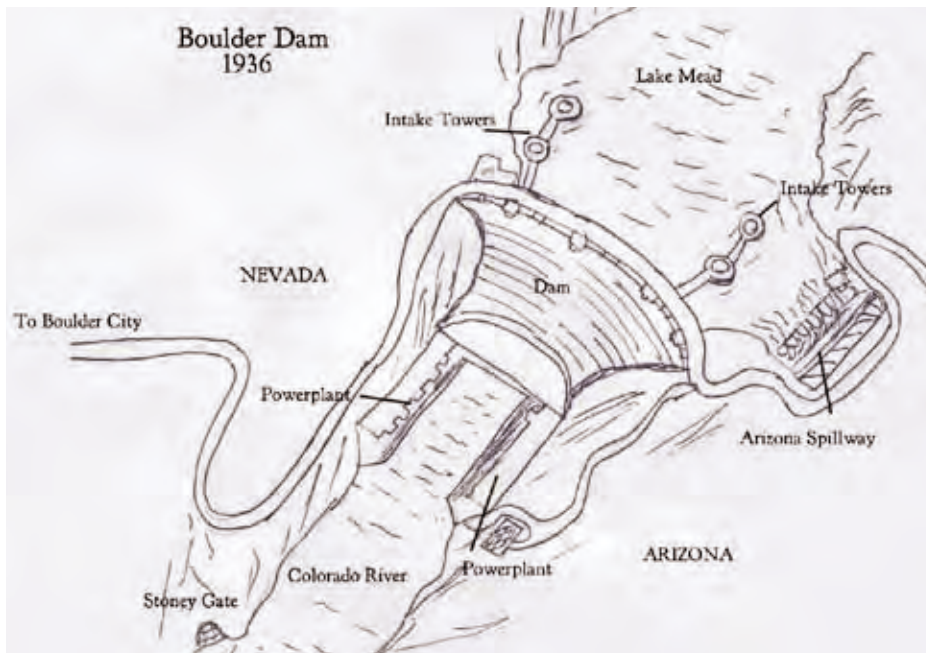
If the heroes cooperate and give the prayer stick to Macray, the archeologist looks at the object with wide-eyed reverence and says:



“Whoever thought such a primitive object could cause sane men to act so irrationally? This is more than a simple stick covered with paint, beads and feathers. To me, it’s the key to a mystery I’m about to solve, a mystery that’ll grant me real power. I thank you for your cooperation.”

With this, Macray walks back to his car with the prayer stick in hand. As he passes one of his mooks, he whispers something in the man’s ear. Suddenly, the mook pushes Talks With The Gods over the side of the dam and gives a signal. The other mooks positioned around the dam begin firing at the heroes while Macray escapes!

The cable supporting Talks With The Gods is 50 feet long and the shaman dangles at the end of it, above the 735-foot dam! His



wrists start bleeding and it's only a matter of time when the cable loosens, sending him plummeting to his death below! Heroes have six rounds before the cable loosens and one round after that before Talks With The Gods falls. The cable can be pulled and the shaman hoisted up, but doing so requires a Strength check each round the heroes are pulling the cable. It takes three continuous rounds before the shaman is hoisted to safety. Heroes who want to shimmy down the cable must make a Strength roll and another Strength roll to lift the shaman. Then the hero must get a raise on his climbing roll while climbing up the cable with the shaman in tow.

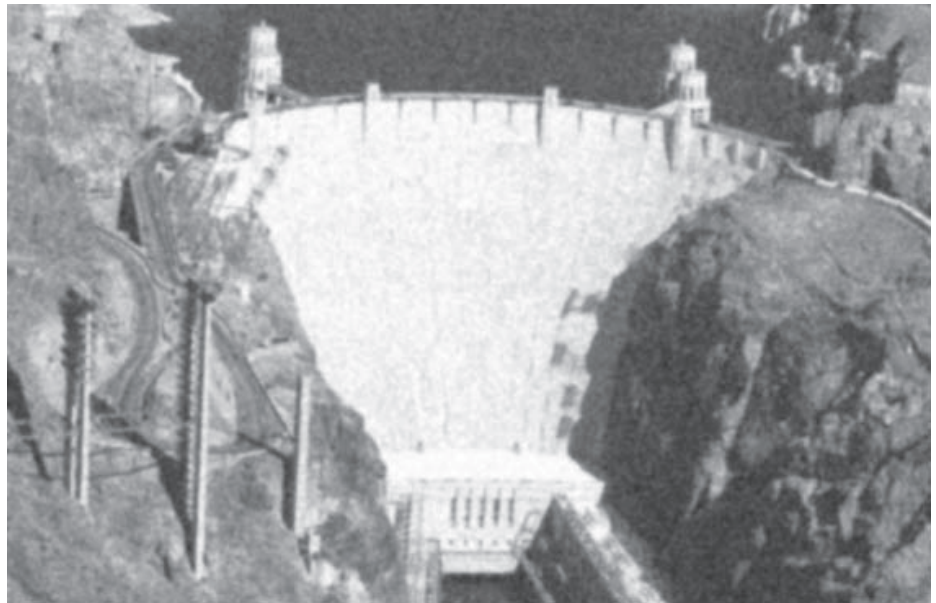
If the heroes fail, Talks With The Gods falls to his death. It'll be bad news to his grandson in New York if this happens. The heroes may try to salvage the remainder of the adventure by finding their way to Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico and stopping Macray's expedition.

Useful Information

If Talks With The Gods is rescued, he profusely thanks the heroes for saving him.

Finding Pueblo Bonito isn't particularly difficult; its existence and location are well documented. Finding a way into the Great Kiva is another matter. Talks With The Gods tells the heroes he overheard Macray talk about a journal once belonging to Richard Wetherill, who explored many of the Anasazi ruins. In 1903 Richard Wetherill chronicled his excavations at Pueblo Bonito, including a way into the lower levels.

The heroes must get Wetherill's journal to unlock this information. According to Talks With The Gods, he overheard Macray say Wetherill's journal is in a county museum in Bluff City, Utah. The shaman said Macray will try to steal the journal and suggests the heroes beat the rogue archeologist at his own game by getting the journal first!



Red Rock Country

The trip through northern Arizona into southern Utah by car takes one full day of travel through beautiful, rocky scenery. Spectacular canyons, natural weathered rock formations and mountains and hills of various ringed colors give the place the name, "the painted desert."

The area is quite remote, and local Navajo make helpful guides, but warn outsiders of the nocturnal terrors existing out in the desert and hills. Supernatural creatures like werewolves, ghosts and spirit eaters or ghouls are on the prowl. If the trip is a little too quiet, you might want to have your heroes encounter these creatures.

BLUFF CITY, UTAH

Bluff City is a small town in the southeast corner of Utah, near the Four Corners area. The town has a bank, police station, town hall, post office, hotel and a variety of shops and stores. The county museum is a quaint building located next to a church on Main Street.

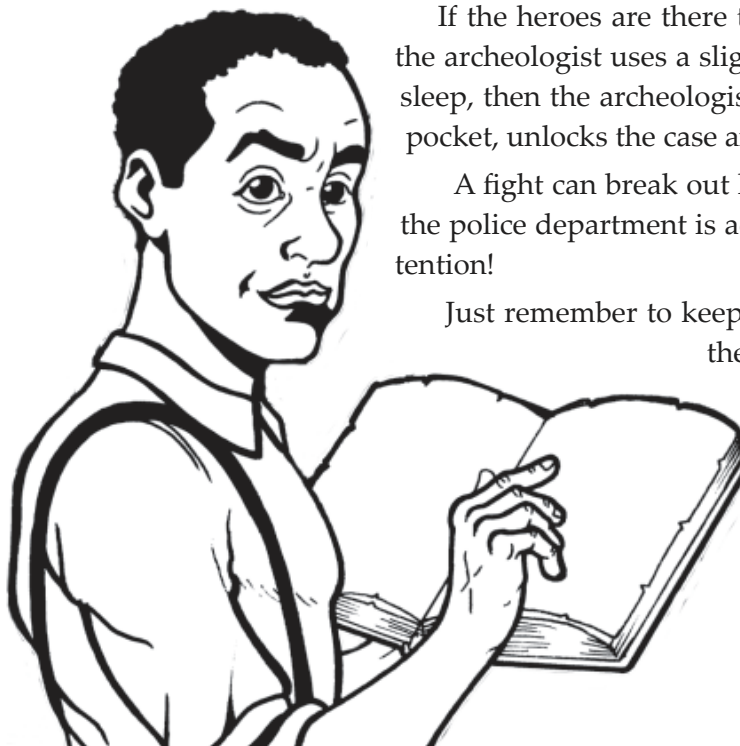
Getting the journal, which is behind a glass display case along with other relics of Wetherill's expeditions, will take finesse. The museum curator, a surly man named Peter South, doesn't tolerate any funny business, and won't hesitate calling the police, which, incidentally, are headquartered across the street.



South can explain the background of Wetherill's excavations of Chaco Canyon, his interest in the Anasazi, the various bits of pottery and baskets and tools on display in great, exhaustive detail. Feel free to exaggerate to the players and do your best, boring museum curator impression. If the heroes are foolish enough to inquire about something to a museum curator, they'll get a long-winded explanation of everything on display.

If the heroes want to Persuade South to relinquish the journal, have them make their Persuasion rolls at -2. South is very committed to his collection and doesn't want anything damaged.

If the heroes are the smash-and-grab type, South goes wild, yelling at the heroes for breaking the display case and damaging valuable museum property. He leaves and returns with three police officers who arrest the heroes.



If the heroes are there to stop Macray from getting the journal, they find the archeologist uses a slightly different tactic. His Aztec goons put South to sleep, then the archeologist simply grabs the display case keys from South's pocket, unlocks the case and snatches the journal.

A fight can break out here quickly if the heroes want it. Just don't forget the police department is across the street and any loud gunfire will draw attention!

Just remember to keep Macray alive; he plays a major part at the end of the adventure.

The Journal

Wetherill's journal has seen better days. The old book contains handwritten entries from 1895 until 1906. The passage of interest about Pueblo Bonito was written in 1903 and has been reproduced at the end of this adventure as a handout for your players.

Rustlin' Up Some Varmints!

Macray may be evil, but he's not stupid. He knows the heroes present a threat to his expedition and wants them eliminated as quickly as possible. Macray hired some cowboys from a local ranch to "take care" of the heroes when they leave Bluff City.

About two hours after leaving the town, eight cowboys on horseback sweep down from the hills and ambush the heroes! The cowboys, led by ranch hand Eli McGurk, show no mercy as they ride their horses beside the heroes' car and fire their pistols and shotguns!

The cowboys will abandon their efforts if half their number is killed. They turn tail and ride off into the hills, back to their ranch to lick their wounds.

COWBOYS

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d10

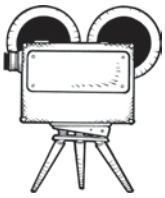
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Taunt d6, Shooting d8, Notice d6.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Mean

Edges: Block

Gear: Pistols, lassoes, shotguns, throwing knives, horses.



SCENE 3

CHACO CANYON

Chaco Canyon, New Mexico is the site of several Anasazi ruins and its many stone settlements were the center of Anasazi culture, containing the social, religious and economic life of the Anasazi people.

What remains are crumbling stone walls, potsherds and the occasional woven baskets, but many amateur treasure hunters have turned up gold, turquoise and silver figurines, masks and other glittering prizes.

Chaco Canyon seems to have been the center of a ceremonial, mystical network of roads radiating hundreds miles in several directions, going over hills, mesas and other natural obstacles. Some speculate the lines channeled supernatural energy toward Chaco Canyon. Others claim the lines weren't built by the Anasazi at all but by another people and culture a thousand years before the Anasazi arrived.

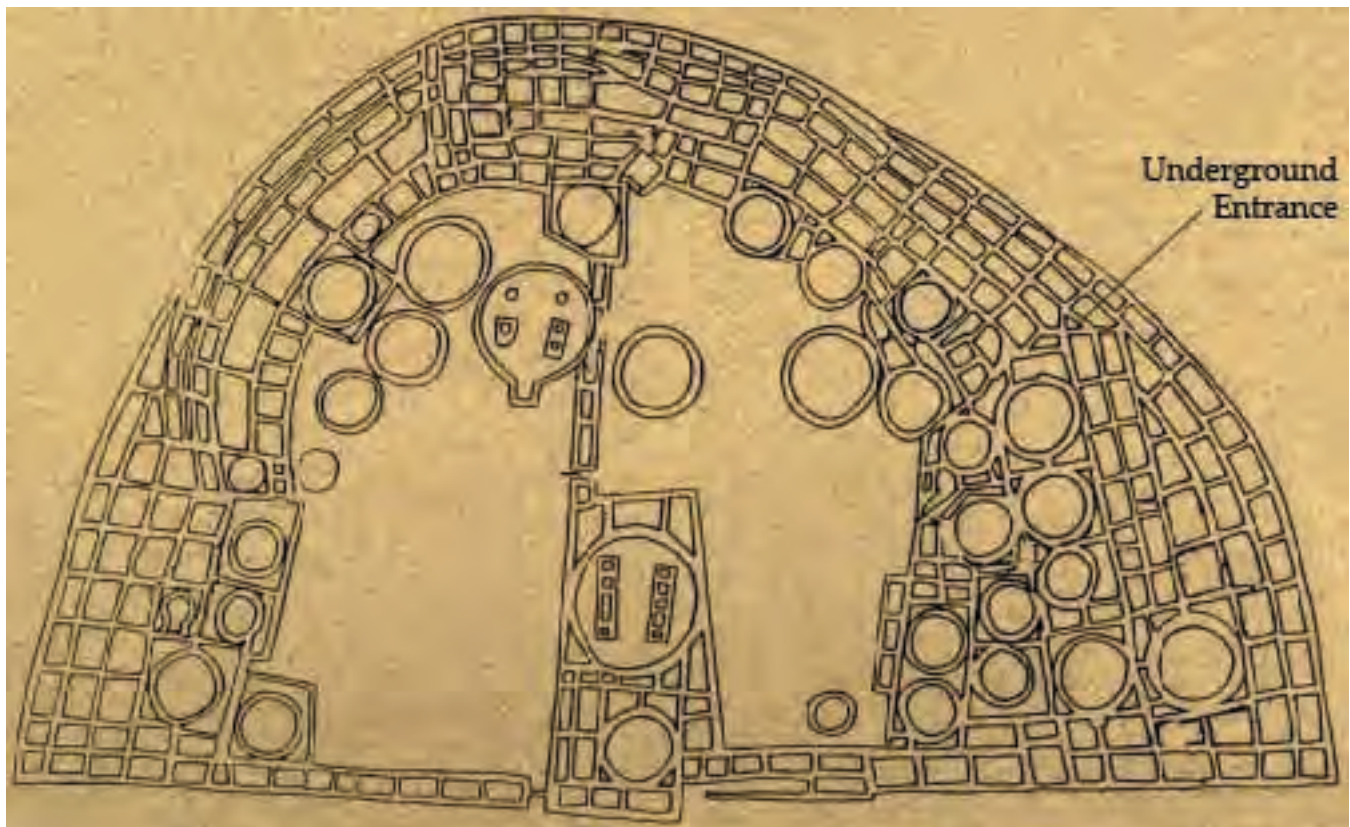
Pueblo Bonito

The Early Spanish conquistadores called the settlements of over six hundred rooms and three levels Pueblo Bonito ("pretty village") when they stumbled upon them. Unlike the cliff dwellings the Anasazi built, Pueblo Bonito rests on the canyon floor.

The Pueblo Bonito ruins resemble a cluster of several stone rooms and large rings called kiva, or ceremonial chambers. Most of the above ground rooms have been pilfered by generations of treasure hunters, so finding anything of value is difficult. Notice rolls in any of the rooms are made at -4 due to previous excavations.

If the heroes have Wetherill's journal, they know the way into the lower levels is through a small triangular room in north-eastern area of the adobe complex. Finding it means searching the many small earthen rooms. This task can be done from a higher vantage point, or by making Notice rolls in several rooms.

If the heroes have the prayer stick, they notice the relic glows with an eerie light as they approach the triangular room.





Underground

The triangular room is loaded with debris: rocks, dirt and sand cover the floor, and it takes some serious digging to remove them. Once the debris is removed, a small wooden trapdoor appears blocking the lower level.

The underground level is a warren of narrow passages and rooms. The air here is choked with the stench of death, and anyone entering the underground level must make a Vigor roll or become nauseous from the smell. Characters also need a light source if they're going to explore the lower levels: the place is pitch dark and uneven floors can cause injury if the heroes stumble around in the blackness.

Exploring the undisturbed lower level can yield artifacts. Each time your heroes want to look for artifacts, have them make a Search roll. On a raise, they find one item! Roll on the table below to determine the object found.

ANASAZI OBJECTS

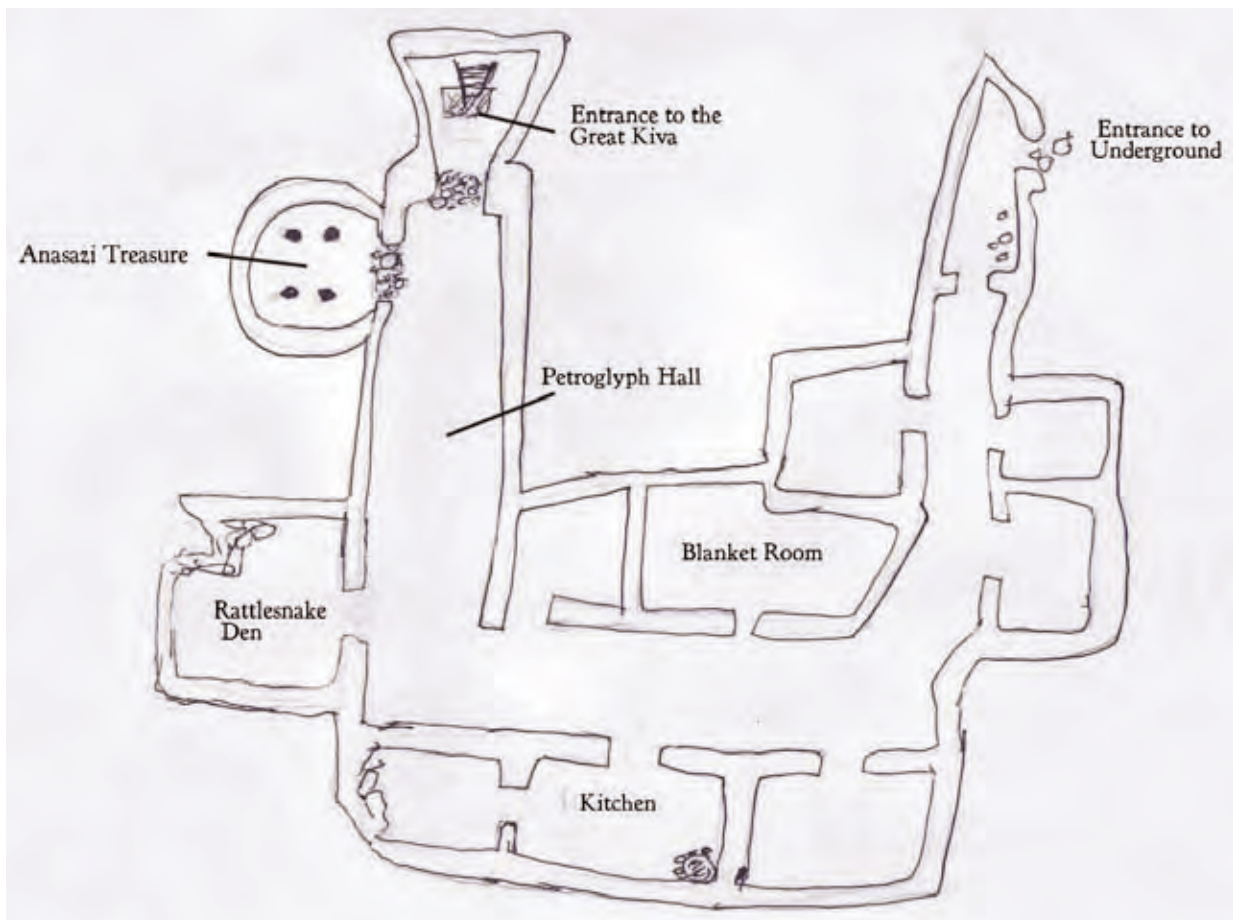
1d6	Object	Cost
1-2	Pottery shard	d4+3 x \$100
3	Whole pottery	d4 x \$100 + \$1,000
4-5	Flint tool	d10 x \$10 + \$100
6	Woven basket	d4 x \$100 + \$1,100

BLANKET ROOM

This small square room is empty, save for a skeletal figure wrapped in a colorful woven blanket. The figure's arms and legs appear bound by rope and the skeleton's grizzly appearance causes anyone looking at it to make a Guts check. The remnants of another woven blanket lay shredded in the corner. Heroes making an Investigation roll determine the skeleton to be over 500 years old.

KITCHEN

Heroes discover a few crude metal tools in this small chamber, namely knives and a few primitive saws.



Some woven baskets and clay bowls are also here, along with a few skeletons of small animals. Heroes making a Notice or Search roll find a clay pot filled with what appear to be human bones. A few of the bones appear to be severely gnawed. A firepit is in one corner, and what appears to be a chimney is blocked by debris.

RATTLESNAKE DEN

A family of rattlesnakes nests in one of Pueblo Bonito's underground chambers. When the heroes enter the chamber, have whichever hero's in the lead make a Notice roll to hear a faint rattling sound. Another Notice or Search roll locates a small borrow underneath a section of fallen wall. Six rattlesnakes are here, and the hero's loud investigating draws them out. They begin attacking, rattling their tails and biting whoever is closest.

For stats on the rattlesnake, use the Snake, Venomous stats from the *Savage Worlds* rulebook, page 131.

PETROGLYPH HALL

This long corridor leads toward the Great Kiva. The hall is five feet wide and a narrow squeeze, and bits of rock and debris litter the floor. The walls of the hall are decorated with disturbing, monstrous petroglyphs depicting warriors being killed by supernatural beings. Though the petroglyphs appear crudely drawn, they are enchanted. Anyone passing them can make a Notice roll to detect the petroglyphs oddly shimmering.

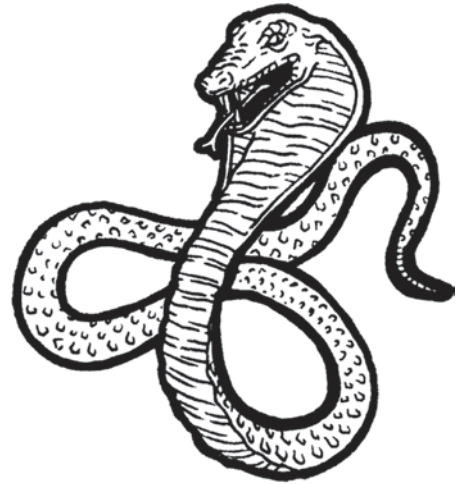
When the heroes least expect it, the petroglyphs come to life, peeling themselves off the walls and attacking the characters.

The petroglyphs are enchanted guardians drawn by Dark Whisperer to protect the Great Kiva. There are eight various petroglyphs, and each one stands four feet high. The petroglyphs are armed with the barrier and bolt spells, but can use their spears and arrows for more conventional attacks. The petroglyphs cannot be harmed by conventional weapons: only magic attacks affect them.

THE ANASAZI TREASURE

When the heroes first discover this chamber, it's sealed off from the main passage by crumbling clay bricks, which are easily removed by hacking or sawing through them. The room is circular, like a kiva, but smaller, with wooden beams and posts supporting it. Strewn around the room are various glittering artifacts and treasures, from gold and turquoise masks, weapons, totems and jewelry. An array of Anasazi war clubs, spears and arrows are also here. Mingled with the treasure are several Aztec items, including a sacrificial dagger and shield bearing the images of Aztec deities.

The whole treasure is worth \$70,000 if brought to the surface intact. Individual pieces range from \$300 to \$1,000. It is up to the GM to determine just what bit of treasure is worth what amount of money.



PETROGLYPH GUARDIAN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidate d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6
Special Abilities

Spells: barrier, bolt

Spear: STR+d1 **Claws:** STR

Fearless: The petroglyphs never suffer from Fear effects and cannot be Intimidated

Immunity: The petroglyphs are immune to attacks from conventional weapons



Great Kiva Entrance

This small, featureless chamber is empty except for a hole at its center and a wooden ladder leading down into the darkness. The ladder descends 25 feet below into the Great Kiva.

GREAT KIVA

The Great Kiva is a large circular underground chamber where the Anasazi practiced their rituals and medicine. It's also where Dark Whisperer opened a portal to the spirit world after a mass human sacrifice, sending his brothers into the great beyond.

Only accessible by a ladder through the ceiling, the Great Kiva is 100' in diameter. The walls are made of red sandstone blocks and decorated with pictographs showing various gods and hunting scenes. The floor here is littered with dozens, maybe hundreds of human skeletons. A Successful Notice rolls reveals each skull bears a distinctive hole at the back.

On the floor at the center of the Great Kiva is a circle of colored sand. Inside the circle is a wooden stool with three holes, and resting in two of the three holes are prayer sticks. The desiccated remains of a shaman rests here. The shaman clutches various pouches of dried herbs and powdered animal remains. In the shaman's belt is a red tomahawk.

A Notice roll reveals the two other prayer sticks and a hole for one more. If the players have Talks With The Gods' prayer stick, they can place it in the hole beside the others. When this happens, the three sticks glow eerily.

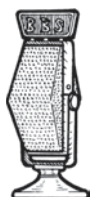
The Portal Opens

If Macray has the prayer stick, he places it beside the others, and begins reciting an incantation in an ancient, forgotten language.

Immediately, a shimmering portal manifests at the far end of the room. The portal resembles a swirling green vortex with spirits spinning within. Humans cannot enter the portal; they merely pass through it as if it were a beam of light from a movie projector. Spirits, however, are immediately sucked into the portal and are transported into the afterworld, a dimension inhabited by Native American deities and spirit warriors.

DARK WHISPERER AWAKES!

If Macray activates the portal, he excitedly announces he's discovered the secret to the Anasazi's disappearance. He gloats in front of the heroes (in true villain form).



"The Anasazi used this portal to enter the spirit world and escape their enemies!" Macray cries. "I will summon them back from the land of the dead and they will inhabit human bodies so I can interview them about their culture. I will be famous beyond measure!" He turns to the heroes and smiles. "I have just the bodies for the Anasazi souls to inhabit..."

Regardless of whether Macray or the characters activate the portal, and before the heroes can act, Dark Whisperer makes his presence known.

DARK WHISPERER (WILD CARD)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Taunt d8, Intimidate d8, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Edges: Arcane Background: Magic
Special Abilities

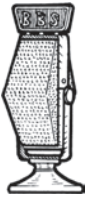
Claws: Str

Spells: bolt, blast, detect/conceal
arcana, barrier

Undead: Dark Whisperer adds +2 on attempts at recovering from being Shaken, and arrows, bullets and other piercing weapons only do half damage. Dark Whisperer doesn't suffer from Wound Modifiers.

Fearless: Dark Whisperer doesn't suffer from Fear affects and cannot be Shaken.

Gear: Enchanted Tomahawk
(Str+1d12 damage)



The desiccated shaman lying in the center of the Great Kiva, emits a terrible groan. The eyes begin to glow red and Dark Whosperer pulls himself upright. He surveys his surroundings and the strangers in his domain.

With lightening speed, he grabs Macray by the neck and lifts him off the ground. The undead shaman reaches into his belt and pulls out the tomahawk. Grinning vilely, Dark Whisperer strikes Macray a sickening blow to head, and drops the archeologist to the ground.

A misty form exudes from the gaping wound in Macray's head; his spirit is leaving his body. The apparition floats in the air for a moment and then moves toward the swirling vortex. The heroes watch the spirit struggle to break free but, with a ghostly scream, it is sucked into the the spirit realm. Dark Whisperer barks a mad laugh and, clutching the tomahawk tighter in his bony fingers, turn his attention to the heroes.

Heroes who witness this guesome event must make a Guts check.

Dark Whisperer demonstrated how the Anasazi managed to leave this world and enter another. He wants to kill the heroes so their souls can enter the spirit realm! If a hero is killed by Dark Whisperer's tomahawk, have the hero roll a Spirit roll immediately after they're killed. If they succeed, their souls are saved and they are Stunned, otherwise they are sucked into the vortex and the spirit world beyond!

The Great Escape

If Dark Whisperer is killed, he evaporates into dust. The entire kiva shakes and the ceiling and walls begin to collapse. The heroes have five rounds to leave the kiva and lower levels before the cave-in.

If the heroes don't make it out, they suffer 2d12 damage from falling debris and might become trapped underground. If they are still underground after five rounds after Dark Whisperer is killed, roll a d6. On a 3-6 they are trapped in an underground room and are unhurt. But on a 1 or 2, they are pinned under falling debris and must make a Strength roll to move it and escape. Characters pinned by debris are considered prone and Shaken and might require help.

When the heroes reach the upper level, they notice Pueblo Bonito sunk several feet.

AFTERMATH

If Talks With The Gods is still alive, he thanks the heroes for helping to discover the truth about the Anasazi. If the shaman managed to grab his prayer stick in the skirmish with Dark Whisperer, he breaks it in half defiantly. He tells the heroes he will quit show business and return to be a shaman to his people, bringing comfort and the old ways to the Navajo. Each hero receives three experience points if Talks With The Gods survives.

If Dark Whisperer survives, the undead Anasazi medicine man takes his vengeance out on the surrounding native settlements by fashioning an army of undead Anasazi warriors. Congratulations! A new villain is born!

If the Aztecs survive the encounter, they report back to the Order of the Winged Serpent. Seven Jaguar sends another expedition to Pueblo Bonito to probe through the rubble and uncover any prayer sticks or artifacts that remain.

If the heroes killed Dark Whisperer and Talks With The Gods is safe, they receive the \$1,000 reward John Yazzie promised them, plus they get to keep any treasure taken from the Anasazi ruins. If they want to cash in on their adventure, The New York Chronicle is paying \$500 for their story about the mystery of the Anasazi.

CREDITS

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EXCERPT FROM RICHARD WETHERILL'S JOURNAL

August 16, 1903

This particular dwelling at Chaco Canyon, Pueblo Bonito, is very intriguing. Built in the shape of a D with hundreds of rooms, the settlement is apparently a site of religious and political significance to the Cliff Dwellers. According to some of the native tribes I've interviewed recently about it, the site has astronomical significance and is the center of an ancient road network, a hub of the Cliff Dweller society.

Whatever happened here was very important. I believe this settlement was as mysterious and as important to the Cliff Dwellers as Stonehenge was to the ancient Britons.

My previous excavations unearthed many intact samples of pottery, stone tools, human bones and other mundane artifacts no doubt of interest to museums and universities. I have already shipped a number of them to New York, Boston and Chicago, and Washington expressed interest in what I've found here.

I'm currently excavating the center of the settlement, one with many pictographs, or native picture writing on its walls.

August 17, 1903

A few natives are curious about my work and entered camp today, frightening my wife Marietta and a few assistants as we removed debris blocking a passage into the lower level of the settlement. The triangular room has a hole leading down to the lower levels with hardly any obstructions.

After exchanging a few tokens and other sundry items, the natives told me more about the settlement. Apparently, this Pueblo Bonito was the site of great religious ceremonies conducted hundreds of years ago. The people lost sight of the truth and the old ways and latched on to the beliefs of a medicine man, or shaman, who practiced wicked magic. The natives told me the shaman, Dark Whisperer, opened a gateway to the spirit world and the people's spirits departed their bodies and they found peace in the world of the dead. I must say that the native's stories left me and the others visibly shaken and uneasy, but I laughed and realized it was just a simple story designed to frighten the gullible and superstitious.

August 18, 1903

Some of the workers halted the excavation into the lower levels today, saying the natives we've employed refused to continue. The Ute laborer, Johnny, said he discovered a series of disturbing pictographs and begged me to take a look. I complied and will record what I've seen on the walls here.

The pictographs depicted six figures, all human in appearance. One of the figures, a dominant authority figure, was larger than the others and had wide eyes and carried a ritualistic object, like a totem or stick. The lesser five figures appeared to be cowering or suffering below him. A spiraling shape was painted between the small and larger figures.

I do not understand what these strange depictions mean, but I can only assume they are mythological in origin and persuaded my team to resume their work, paying little heed to the pictographs.

August 21, 1903

After a much-needed rest, we resumed work on the Pueblo Bonito excavation, unearthing a small chamber and several artifacts, including 16 pieces of pottery, three stone knives, two cutting tools, a finely-woven basket and a woven blanket. These pieces will be shipped to my contacts in New York.

I believe morale has improved among the team and the fright we received a few days ago subsided. I am confident we will clear more debris and uncover more rooms tomorrow.

August 22, 1903

Damn my foolish pride and certainty! Today we found a disturbing number of human skeletons, all intact. Some of the bones appeared to be gnawed, while others were fractured and splintered, as if a stone implement cracked them. The bones were found in a round chamber along with a set of fresh pictoglyphs more disturbing than the last set. I will summon the natives living nearby and ask them what these strange pictures mean. The deeper we go, the more Pueblo Bonito resembles a graveyard than an important religious site.

August 23, 1903

The natives visited the site today and appeared disturbed at what they saw. They told us not to proceed with further excavating the center of Pueblo Bonito and that the outer rooms possessed no real danger to us. I asked them what they meant and they replied the center of the settlement was the way into the lowest level, an underground kiva, or ceremonial chamber where Dark Whisperer holds court with the dead. The natives said Pueblo Bonito is a sacred site where their dead ancestors remain and we should show reverence for them.

Several hours after the natives left, I pondered what they said. The newest pictoglyphs showed a ladder descending downward and three sticks or poles lined with decorations and feathers, before a strange spiral shape. Beneath the spiral were several small human figures all lying down. They appeared dead. More disturbing than that, was the large figure with the bulbous eyes towering over them, appearing to survey this scene of destruction.

At my wife's urging, I have halted all further excavation of the center of Pueblo Bonito. I do this out of respect for the dead but also because my men threatened to leave if work continued. Already a few of them complained of stomach cramps and illness, as if they were cursed by something rotten wafting up from the earth.

Those wishing to resume digging Pueblo Bonito in the future should remember the chamber we unearthed is not the final way underground. There's one small triangular chamber, covered with sand and dirt, under which is a wooden trapdoor leading below. The natives claim the lower levels are protected by magic and the only way down is by countering the spell, whatever that means.

I do not contemplate such things. For now, we'll concentrate on the outer rooms, where I've found some remarkable pottery and baskets and wager more await us.